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ABSTRACT

This guide presents research-based practices and elements that are essential to effective systemic reform, especially as such reform relates to the needs, challenges, and context of urban schools. It is designed to enable school leadership teams to develop, review, and revise school plans that focus on the elements of effective educational leadership, teaching, and learning. This guide is intended to be used as a formal review with external technical assistance providers, or as a school self-review. Topics, highlighted as elements, have been constructed and expanded from various components of the nine criteria emphasized in Comprehensive School Reform work. As each criterion was examined, indicators were designed to help urban schools engage in in-depth conversations about internal and external research-based effective strategies often ignored by already overburdened urban school teams. Each item in the inquiry guide has performance indicators that describe the school's characteristics in relation to performance standards identified in educational research literature as essential for effective educational practice. The essential elements are: school mission/philosophy; school climate; school organization; curriculum and instruction; assessment; professional development; instructional resources; parent/family involvement; support services; and external and physical resources. (SM)

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Essential Elements of Effective Systemic Reform in Schools

Urban Learner Framework

Inquiry Guide

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North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
"Applying Research and Technology to Learning"

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Essential Elements of Effective Systemic Reform in Schools
Urban Learner Framework Inquiry Guide

School Mission/Philosophy

- Belief in students, their families, and communities
- Belief in school staff

School Climate

- Welcoming atmosphere for students, families, and staff
- Environment for learning and participation

School Organization

- School plans, structure, and practice
- Staff qualifications and opportunities to learn
- Decision-making processes and opportunities to participate
- Multiple opportunities to lead and mentor

Curriculum and Instruction

- Instructional program characteristics
- Instructional program implementation
- Instructional practice tied to leadership and evaluation practices
- Multiple instructional strategies/approaches that reflect research-based best practices
- Awareness and application of the role of culture and language in learning development and academic achievement

Assessment

- School assessment program (informal and formal)
- Student performance (informal and formal)
- School effectiveness (student achievement and staff performance)

Professional Development

- Development of staff
- Formal and informal activities (ongoing and independent)
- Processes for developing and enhancing skills, and contexts for promoting community/collegiality and decisionmaking among staff
- Processes for developing and enhancing skills that promote deep conceptual knowledge of core content

Instructional Resources

- Library/multimedia center
- Computers
- Equipment and supplies
- External and community resources
- Extracurricular activities and resources

Parent/Family Involvement

- Parent/family outreach and participation
- Community outreach and participation
- Parent/family education and support through school and community resources

Support Services

- Attendance and expulsion rates
- Student support services staff (counselors, special educators, ESL/bilingual staff, social and health services staff)
- Community resources/linkages

External and Physical Resources

- Securing and allocating supplementary instructional resources
- Noninstructional resources

Introduction

This Urban Learners Framework Inquiry Guide reflects research-based practices and elements that are essential to effective educational systemic reform, especially as such reform relates to the needs, challenges, and context of urban schools. This guide was designed to enable school leadership teams to develop, review, and revise school plans that focus on the essential elements of effective educational leadership, teaching, and learning. Topics, highlighted as elements, have been constructed and expanded from various components of the nine criteria emphasized in Comprehensive School Reform work (1998, NCREL, *Making Good Choices*). As each criterion was examined, indicators were designed to assist urban schools in engaging in in-depth conversations about internal and external researched-based effective strategies often left unattended by already-overburdened urban school teams. Incorporated within the indicators are urban learners teaching and learning theories authored by Belinda Williams (*Closing the Achievement Gap*, 1996). This guide is best used as a formal review with external technical assistance providers, or as a school self-review.

Each item in the Inquiry Guide has performance indicators that describe the school's characteristics in relation to performance standards identified in educational research literature as essential for effective educational practice. Performance indicators are displayed on a five-point scale: "5" is the performance description for meeting the standard most (90%) of the time; "3" describes approaching the standard some (75%) of the time; and "1" describes substandard school performance (meeting the standard less than 25% of the time). The two additional rating points in this version of the Inquiry Guide describe varying degrees of approaching the standard: "4" describes school performance that is closer to meeting the standard, while "2" describes school characteristics that are closer to falling under the standard. The Inquiry Guide offers general rubrics and descriptive phrases for the ratings.

After collecting and discussing the evidence pertaining to a particular item, the collaborative review team collectively determines a rating. When choosing a rating for a particular item, the review team should keep several general considerations in mind. Since the review involves a brief visit that offers a snapshot of the life of the school, it is necessary to look for patterns of evidence. These patterns form the basis for generalizations about what happens in the entire school during the course of the school year. In examining evidence, reviewers reflect on whether a pattern of activity or behavior is occurring systematically and schoolwide, and whether it supports excellence, high standards, and elements essential in supporting the urban learner. Because self-reflection is a critical ingredient for school planning, it is important that the review be as rigorous and insightful as possible. Evidence should be discussed and ratings determined collaboratively between technical assistance providers/visitors and the school leadership team.

Ratings are based on what is happening or has happened in the school. They provide a means for documenting school improvement through a set of performance indicators that supplement the school's achievement data. Therefore, collaborative reviews should make every effort to rate every item in the Inquiry Guide. Howeve[illegible]n rare instances when an item does not apply, entries should be made in the "Comments" column to explain why the item is inappropriate. Additional entries in the "Comments" column allow collaborative reviews to: (1) provide explanations and evidence to support ratings acknowledge exemplary practices, (2) identify specific strategies or practices that contribute to approaching and below ratings, and (3) furnish additional evidence that may have been overlooked to support a higher rating.

The indicator statements associated with ratings for each item generally are differentiated by a few key words in bold. These words are the basis for distinguishing between levels of school performance. Collaborative reviewers should focus on the key words that appear in the "Meeting Standard" column and then determine whether the evidence for that item is systematic and schoolwide to support a rating of meeting the standard. (The modifier "all" is often implicit.) Words in italics are defined in the glossary.

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Please select one rating for each item and include the source of evidence, comments, and explanations

Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
School Mission/ Philosophy *Belief in Students*	The schools *mission statement* contains **all** of the following characteristics: (1) a belief that *all students* can meet *high standards* of *excellence;* (2) an emphasis on the role of the school and home in ensuring children's *cognitive,* creative, and social growth; and (3) the responsibility of the school to engage *all students* in active and productive activities. Members of the *school community* **know and are implementing** the school's mission. **Administrative, teaching staff, parents, and secondary-school students** (if applicable) review and revise the school's mission.		The school's *mission statement* contains **two** of the following characteristics: (1) a belief that *all students* can meet *high standards* of *excellence;* (2) an emphasis on the role of the school and home in ensuring children's *cognitive,* creative, and social growth; and (3) the responsibility of the school to engage *all students* in active and productive activities. Members of the *school community* **know** the school's mission. **Administrative and teaching staff** review and revise the school's mission.		The school's *mission statement* contains **one or none** of the following characteristics: (1) a belief that *all students* can meet *high standards* of *excellence;* (2) an emphasis on the role of the school and home in ensuring children's *cognitive,* creative, and social growth; and (3) the responsibility of the school to engage *all students* in active and productive activities. Members of the *school community* **do not know** the school's mission. **Administrative staff** review and revise the school's mission.		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
School Climate *Welcoming Atmosphere*	**All** areas of the school's *physical plant* are uniformly clean and in good repair.		**Most** areas of the school's *physical plant* are uniformly clean and in good repair.		**Few** areas of the school's *physical plant* are uniformly clean and in good repair.		
	Current and exemplary student and staff work is displayed in hallways and classrooms.		**Current** student and staff work is displayed in hallways and classrooms.		Student and staff work is displayed in hallways and classrooms.		
	Staff and students **are respectful and friendly;** there is a **sense of community** in the school.		Staff and students **are respectful and friendly.**		Staff and students **are not respectful or friendly.**		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
School Climate *Environment*	Student instruction and activities occur in areas **appropriate** for their use.		**Most** student instruction and activities occur in areas **appropriate** for their use.		**Some** student instruction and activities occur in areas that are **inappropriate** for their use and interfere with teaching and learning.		
	The *school community* is **aware** of the applicable procedures in the *school safety plan*, **procedures** are implemented throughout the school, the school is **safe**, and procedures are **frequently reviewed and revised** as needed.		The *school community* is **aware** of the applicable procedures in the *school safety plan*, **procedures** are implemented throughout the school, the school is **safe**.		The *school community* is **aware** of the applicable procedures in the *school safety plan*, **procedures** are implemented throughout the school.		
	Staff, community members, and *students* are trained to prevent, respond to, and resolve conflicts.		**Teachers** are trained to prevent, respond to, and resolve conflicts.		**Few** staff, community members, or students are trained to prevent, respond to, and resolve conflicts.		
	Noise levels and transitions **do not interfere** with teaching and learning.		Noise levels and transitions **occasionally interfere** with teaching and learning.		Noise levels and transitions **interfere** with teaching and learning.		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
School Organization *School Plans, Structure, and Practice*	**Administrative, and teaching staff, parents, caregivers, and secondary students** (if applicable) participate in designing and reviewing school plans that reflect *high standards.*		**Administrative and teaching staff** participate in designing and reviewing school plans that reflect *high standards.*		**Administrative staff** design and review school plans that reflect *high standards.*		
	The principal and *school leadership team* **are implementing** the school plans.		The principal and *school leadership team* **are implementing at least 75 percent** of the school plans.		The principal and *school leadership team* **are implementing few components** of the school plans.		
	The *organizational structure* and *policies and procedures* are **aligned** with school plans.		The *organizational structure* and *policies and procedures* are **mostly aligned** with school plans.		The *organizational structure* and *policies and procedures* are **minimally aligned** with school plans.		
	Staff and school resources **maximize** the school's ability to implement the school's plans.		Staff and school resources **support** the school's ability to implement the school's plans.		Staff and school resources provide **limited support** to implement the school's plans.		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
School Organization	Instructional assignments match **all** school staff's subject-area certification, work, or educational experience.		Instructional assignments match **most** school staff's subject-area certification, work, or educational experience.		Instructional assignments match **some** school staff's subject-area certification, work, or educational experience.		
Staff Qualifications	**Ongoing efforts** are made to recruit and retain a mix of experienced and new culturally and linguistically diverse staff whose life experience **supports and is aligned** with the school's mission.		**Some efforts** are made to recruit and retain a mix of experienced and new culturally and linguistically diverse staff whose experience **supports** the school's mission.		**Few efforts** are made to recruit and retain a mix of experienced and new culturally and linguistically diverse staff.		
	Staff certification is **regularly** reviewed, and administrators take steps to ensure that all teachers in the school become certified in a **timely** fashion.		Staff certification is **occasionally** reviewed, and administrators take steps to ensure that all teachers in the school become certified in a **timely** fashion.		Staff certification is **rarely** reviewed, but administrators take steps to ensure that all teachers in the school become certified.		
	Paraprofessional staff and school volunteers are **regularly** included in professional development sessions, and are provided with **regularly** scheduled orientation or training session(s) to prepare and support them in their work with teachers and **in support of the school mission.**		Paraprofessional staff and school volunteers are **occasionally** included in professional development sessions, and are provided with **regularly** scheduled orientation or training session(s).		Paraprofessional staff and school volunteers are **rarely** included in professional development sessions, and are provided with **regularly** scheduled orientation or training session(s).		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Curriculum and Instruction ***Instructional Program Implementation***	The administrative and teaching staff have **implemented** an *instructional program* that is aligned with current district and state board of education content and *performance standards*. The school has **effectively implemented** an instructional program that ensures continuity of instruction; builds on *students'* knowledge gained in the prior grade, subject area, and school level; and prepares *students* for the next grade, subject, and school level. The instructional program is **structured** to reflect the underlying principles of the *mission statement* with an emphasis on *excellence*. Using schoolwide data, the administrative and teaching staff **review and revise all** aspects of the instructional program to address current needs on a **routine** basis.		The administrative and teaching staff have **selectively implemented** an *instructional program* aligned with current district and state board of education content and *performance standards*. The school has **moderately implemented** an instructional program that ensures continuity of instruction; builds on *students'* knowledge gained in the prior grade, subject area, and school level; and prepares *students* for the next grade, subject, and school level. The instructional program is **mostly structured** to reflect the underlying principles of the *mission statement* with an emphasis on *excellence*. Using schoolwide data, the administrative and teaching staff **review and revise selected** aspects of the instructional program to address current needs on an **occasional** basis.		The administrative and teaching staff have **minimally implemented** an *instructional program* aligned with current district and state board of education content and *performance standards*. The school has **minimally implemented** an instructional program that ensures continuity of instruction; builds on *students'* knowledge gained in the prior grade, subject area, and school level; and prepares *students* for the next grade, subject, and school level. The instructional program is **minimally structured** to reflect the underlying principles of the *mission statement* with an emphasis on *excellence*. The administrative and teaching staff **do not review and revise** the instructional program to address current needs.		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Curriculum and Instruction *Instructional Program Characteristics*	The *instructional program* includes a schoolwide grading policy with specific criteria for **each** subject area and **supports** *high standards.*		The *instructional program* includes a schoolwide grading policy with specific criteria for **some** subject area and **supports** *high standards.*		The *instructional program* includes a schoolwide grading policy with specific criteria for **few** subjects and **little to no evidence of support** for *high standards.*		
	The instructional program contains **a full range** of objectives in *skills, values, and attitudes* that promote success in and beyond school.		The instructional program contains **some** objectives in *skills, values, and attitudes* that promote success in and beyond school.		The instructional program contains **few** objectives in *skills, values, and attitudes* that promote success in and beyond school.		
	Courses/grade-level objectives are **specific** and standards for mastery are **high,** including a **focus on *higher-order thinking skills.***		Courses/grade-level objectives are **specific** and standards for mastery are **high.**		Courses/grade-level objectives are **specific** but standards for mastery are **not emphasized.**		
	The choice of textbooks and instructional materials provides **maximum support** for the instructional program and responds to the instructional needs of ***all students,*** while also promoting multicultural learning and awareness.		The choice of textbooks and instructional materials provides **partial support** for the instructional program, and responds to the instructional needs of **most** students, while also promoting multicultural learning and awareness.		The choice of textbooks and instructional materials provides **minimal support** for the instructional program, and responds to the instructional needs of **some** students, while also promoting multicultural learning and awareness.		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Curriculum and Instruction *Instructional Practice*	Instructional practice **consistently** reflects planning to achieve clear objectives for each lesson and builds on prior knowledge. Lessons include questioning techniques and problem-solving activities to promote achievement of instructional goals **and encourage *critical thinking*.** Lessons **consistently** engage and challenge *students* at their appropriate *developmental/ cognitive levels*. Classroom activities **provide opportunities** to discover the connections between the school, students' communities, and the outside world **and to apply learning in real-world settings.** Teachers **assign and review** homework that **builds** on lessons and supports ***high standards***.		Instructional practice **occasionally** reflects planning to achieve clear objectives for each lesson and builds on prior knowledge. Lessons include questioning techniques and problem-solving activities to promote achievement of instructional goals. Lessons **occasionally** engage and challenge *students* at their appropriate *developmental/ cognitive levels*. Classroom activities **provide opportunities** to discover the connections between the school, students' communities, and the outside world. Teachers **assign** homework that builds on lessons and supports ***high standards.***		Instructional practice **rarely** reflects planning to achieve clear objectives for each lesson, and it builds on prior knowledge. Lessons include **few** questioning techniques and problem-solving activities to promote achievement of instructional goals. Lessons **rarely** engage and challenge *students* at their appropriate *developmental/ cognitive levels*. Classroom activities **rarely provide opportunities** to discover the connections between the school, students' communities, and the outside world. Teachers assign homework with **doubtful relations to lessons.**		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Curriculum and Instruction *Instructional Practice*	Teachers **have directed efforts** toward using the *deficits model* and **believe** that all children bring **resources** to the learning environment and can learn to *high standards*.		Teachers **have not directed efforts** toward using the *deficits model* and there is an **assumption** that all teachers believe that all children can learn.		Teachers **have not directed efforts** toward using the *deficits model* and there are indications that some teachers believe that children who attend this school do not bring resources for learning and that these students cannot learn to high standards.		
	Teachers **effectively and consistently** implement cooperative learning with their *students* and can **effectively** apply group and partner work in various instructional settings.		Teachers **occasionally are effective** at implementing cooperative learning with their *students* and **occasionally** use group and partner work in various instructional settings.		Teachers **rarely** implement cooperative learning with their *students* and **rarely** apply group and partner work in various instructional settings.		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Curriculum and Instruction *Multiple Instructional Strategies/ Approaches*	Teachers **consistently** use a variety of instructional approaches that are appropriate to the subject area, grade level, and *students'* diverse learning styles and abilities. Instructional strategies and approaches **respect** *students'* diverse cultural and language backgrounds. Instruction **consistently** includes a **variety of strategies** to evaluate *students'* learning throughout the lesson. Teachers use whole class instruction, independent learning, and **working together in small, *mutually supportive groups*** to support student learning. Instructional approaches **enable *all students,*** including those with special needs, to meet the same *curriculum* standards. *Students* are **consistently** educated in an ***inclusive and equitable environment.***		Teachers display **some variety** of instructional approaches that are appropriate to the subject area, grade level, and *students'* diverse learning styles and abilities. Instructional strategies and approaches **occasionally** respect *students'* diverse cultural and language backgrounds. Instruction **occasionally** includes a variety of strategies to evaluate *students'* learning throughout the lesson. Teachers primarily use whole class instruction and independent learning to support student learning. Instructional approaches enable **most** students, including those with special needs, to meet most of the same *curriculum* standards. *Students* are **occasionally** educated in an ***inclusive and equitable environment.***		Teachers display **little variety** of instructional approaches that are appropriate to the subject area, grade level, and *students'* diverse learning styles and abilities. Instructional strategies and approaches **rarely** respect *students'* diverse cultural and language backgrounds. Instruction **rarely** includes a variety of strategies to evaluate *students'* learning throughout the lesson. Teachers primarily use whole class instruction to support student learning. Instructional approaches enable **some** students, including those with special needs, to meet few of the same *curriculum* standards. *Students* are **rarely** educated in an ***inclusive and equitable environment.***		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Assessment *School Assessment Program*	The administrative and teaching staff have **implemented** a school *assessment program* aligned with current school district and state board of education content and *performance standards.* The school's assessment program includes ***authentic modes of assessment, school-developed tests,*** **and standardized tests.** Administrative and teaching staff **review and revise needed aspects** of the assessment program to address current needs on a **routine** basis.		The administrative and teaching staff have **partially implemented** a school *assessment program* aligned with current school district and state board of education content and *performance standards.* The school's assessment program includes ***school-developed tests*** and **standardized tests.** Administrative and teaching staff **review and revise needed aspects** of the assessment program to address current needs on an **occasional** basis.		The administrative and teaching staff have **minimally implemented** a school *assessment program* aligned with current school district and state board of education content and *performance standards.* The school's assessment program includes **primarily standardized tests.** Administrative and teaching staff **do not review or revise** the assessment program to address current needs.		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Assessment *Student Performance*	**Teachers, administrators, and *students* review** student achievement to determine if *high standards* are being met.		**Teachers and administrators review** student achievement to determine if *high standards* are being met.		**Teachers and administrators rarely review** student achievement to determine if *high standards* are being met.		
	To improve *student performance*, classroom instruction is **consistently reviewed and modified** based on diagnostic assessments and review of student work.		Classroom instruction is **occasionally** reviewed and modified based on diagnostic assessments and review of student work.		Classroom instruction is **rarely** reviewed and modified based on diagnostic assessments and review of student work.		
	The school provides *diagnostic information* from assessments of individual student progress **to teachers, students, and parents.**		The school provides *diagnostic information* from assessments of individual student progress **to teachers and students.**		The school provides *diagnostic information* from assessments of individual student progress **only to teachers.**		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Assessment *School Effectiveness*	The *school leadership team* **consistently** assesses the success of the school in carrying out its mission in order to modify the school organization and programs. The school leadership team **regularly** uses *aggregate schoolwide data* to assess school effectiveness. Criteria for judging success are **clearly defined and aligned** with current school improvement research findings. The results of school performance reviews are **fully shared** with the *school community* to ensure that *high standards* are met. The results of the district quality review or other school performance reviews are **fully used** in modifying school plans to ensure that *high standards* are met.		The *school leadership team* **occasionally** assesses the success of the school in carrying out its mission in order to modify the school organization and programs. The school leadership team **occasionally** uses *aggregate schoolwide data* to assess school effectiveness. Criteria for judging success are **clearly defined and partially aligned** with current school improvement research findings. The results of school performance reviews are **selectively shared** with the *school community* to ensure that *high standards* are met. The results of the district quality review or other school performance reviews are **partially used** in modifying school plans to ensure that *high standards* are met.		The *school leadership team* **rarely** assesses the success of the school in carrying out its mission in order to modify the school organization and programs. The school leadership team **rarely** uses *aggregate schoolwide data* to assess school effectiveness. Criteria for judging success are **somewhat defined but minimally aligned** with current school improvement research findings. The results of school performance reviews are **rarely shared** with the *school community* to ensure that *high standards* are met. The results of the district quality review or other school performance reviews are **rarely** used in modifying school plans to ensure that *high standards* are met.		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Professional Development *Development of Staff*	In addition to *formal observations*, administrators **frequently conduct *informal observations*** of teaching and learning in all classrooms and **provide support and feedback** to staff. Staff have **regular opportunities** for mutual problem solving and experimentation to improve their instructional practice. **Staff** demonstrate commitment to ongoing *professional self-development* and growth. Administrative and teaching staff **determine** the priorities for professional development based on assessment of student outcomes, teacher need, and current school improvement research findings.		In addition to *formal observations*, administrators **occasionally conduct *informal observations*** of teaching and learning in all classrooms and **provide support and feedback** to staff. Staff have **occasional** opportunities for mutual problem solving and experimentation to improve their instructional practice. **Most staff** demonstrate commitment to ongoing *professional self-development* and growth. Administrative and teaching staff **occasionally determine** the priorities for professional development based on assessment of student outcomes, teacher need, and current school improvement research findings.		There are *formal observations*, but administrators **rarely conduct *informal observations*** of teaching and learning in all classrooms. Staff have **few opportunities** for mutual problem solving and experimentation to improve their instructional practice. **Few staff** demonstrate commitment to ongoing *professional self-development* and growth. Administrative and teaching staff **seldom determine** the priorities for professional development based on assessment of student outcomes, teacher need, and current school improvement research findings.		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Professional Development *Formal Activities*	**Professional development activities are aligned** with the school plan and coordinated with district professional development activities. Staff are **fully aware** of and **frequently participate** in professional development activities. Professional development **frequently** includes mentoring, team teaching modeling, coaching, and demonstration activities to support the implementation of effective teaching and learning. Professional development **frequently** introduces new knowledge and techniques and increases awareness of *students'* and teachers' needs to promote *excellence*. Teaching staff **regularly** apply professional development experiences to instructional practice.		**Some** professional development activities are aligned to the school plan designed and coordinated with district professional development activities. Staff are **fully aware** of and **occasionally participate** in professional development activities. Professional development **occasionally** includes mentoring, team teaching modeling, coaching, and demonstration activities to support the implementation of effective teaching and learning. Professional development **occasionally** introduces new knowledge and techniques and increases awareness of *students'* and teachers' needs to promote *excellence*. Teaching staff **occasionally** apply professional development experiences to instructional practice.		**Few** professional development activities are aligned to the school plan or coordinated with district professional development activities. Staff are **aware** of but **rarely participate** in professional development activities. Professional development **rarely** includes mentoring, team teaching modeling, coaching, and demonstration activities to support the implementation of effective teaching and learning. Professional development **rarely** introduces new knowledge and techniques and increases awareness of *students'* and teachers' needs to promote *excellence*. Teaching staff **seldom** apply professional development experiences to instructional practice.		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Instructional Resources *Library/Multimedia Center*	The school library/multimedia center is characterized by **all** of the following: 1. Sufficiently stocked with print, computer, and *multimedia materials* to support the school's *instructional program* 2. Materials address *individual student interests and needs*, including cultures and languages 3. Materials are up-to-date, in good condition, and attractively displayed The library/multimedia center is staffed by a **full-time** librarian/library teacher, who provides instructional, electronic, and reference services to the **entire** *school community*. *Students*, their parents and families, and school staff have access to the library **throughout the school day, as well as before and after school.**		The school library/multimedia center is characterized by **two** of the following: 1. Sufficiently stocked with print, computer and *multimedia materials* to support the school's *instructional program* 2. Materials address *individual student interests and needs*, including different cultures and languages 3. Materials are up-to-date, in good condition, and attractively displayed The library/multimedia center is staffed by a **full-time** librarian/library teacher, who provides instructional, electronic, and reference services to the **most** of the *school community*. *Students*, their parents and families, and school staff have access to the library **throughout the school day.**		The school library/multimedia center is characterized by **one** of the following: 1. Sufficiently stocked with print, computer and *multimedia materials* to support the school's instructional program 2. Materials address *individual student interests and needs*, including different cultures and languages 3. Materials are up-to-date, in good condition, and attractively displayed The library/multimedia center is staffed by a **part-time** librarian/library teacher, who provides instructional, electronic, and reference services to a **limited segment** of the *school community*. *Students*, their parents and families, and school staff have access to the library during **limited hours of the school day.**		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Instructional Resources *Computers*	The building is **wired** for computer networking and **Internet access** via dedicated communications lines; *hardware* and *software* have been installed in ***technology centers*, the library, and most classrooms.**		The building is **wired** for computer use; *hardware* and *software* have been installed in ***technology centers*, the library, and selected classrooms.**		The building is **wired** for computer use; *hardware* and *software* have been installed in technology centers.		
	All students have **frequent** access to computers in classrooms, the library, and *technology centers*.		**Most students** have **occasional** access to computers in classrooms, the library and **technology centers.**		**Some students** have limited access to computers in classrooms, the library and **technology centers.**		
	All teachers are trained to be proficient in using technology as instructional tools.		**Most teachers** are trained to be proficient in using technology as instructional tools.		**Few teachers** are trained to be proficient in using technology as instructional tools.		
	The school has **daily** access to a technology support system.		The school has access **several days a week** to a technology support system.		The school has access to a technology support system only on an **as-needed** basis.		
	Students use computers to **practice and expand their research, *critical thinking*, writing, and subject-area skills.**		Students use computers to **practice and expand their writing and subject-area skills.**		Students use computers to **practice their writing and subject-area skills.**		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Instructional Resources	Throughout the school year, *consumable supplies* are **adequate and always available.**		Throughout the school year, *consumable supplies* are *adequate and available most of the time.*		Throughout the school year, *consumable supplies* are **inadequate and at times available**.		
Equipment and Supplies	Throughout the school year, the stock of equipment, manipulatives, and books is **adequate and always available.**		Throughout the school year, the stock of equipment, manipulatives, and books is **adequate and available most of the time.**		Throughout the school year, the stock of equipment, manipulatives, and books is **inadequate and at times available.**		
	All students have equal opportunities to use up-to-date equipment and supplies.		**Most** students have equal opportunities to use up-to-date equipment and supplies.		**Few** students have equal opportunities to use up-to-date equipment and supplies.		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Parent/Family Involvement ***Parent/Family Participation and Community Outreach***	Planning of schoolwide, grade, and classroom activities **consistently** takes into account the *resources, needs, and availability of parents, caregivers, and other family members* who support students' learning.		Planning of schoolwide, grade, and classroom activities **occasionally** takes into account the *resources, needs, and availability of parents, caregivers, and other family members* who support students' learning.		Planning of schoolwide, grade, and classroom activities **rarely** takes into account the *resources, needs, and availability of parents, caregivers, and other family members* who support students' learning.		
	Classroom, grade, and schoolwide activities **regularly** involve parents or other caregivers in their children's education.		Classroom, grade, and schoolwide activities **occasionally** involve parents or other caregivers in their children's education.		Classroom, grade, and schoolwide activities **rarely** involve parents or other caregivers in their children's education.		
	Using a variety of strategies, the school provides **frequent** *outreach* to parents or other caregivers.		Using a variety of strategies, the school provides **occasional** *outreach* to parents or other caregivers.		Using a variety of strategies, the school provides **limited** *outreach* to parents or other caregivers.		
	There are **frequent** opportunities for parents, family members, or other caregivers to participate with teachers in mutual information sharing.		There are **occasional** opportunities for parents, family members, or other caregivers to participate with teachers in mutual information sharing.		There are **limited** opportunities for parents, family members, or other caregivers to participate with teachers in mutual information sharing.		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Parent/Family Involvement ***Parent/Family Education***	Procedures for parent and family education include **all** of the following: 1. Assessing the needs of *students* and their families 2. Sharing information about school *instructional and assessment programs* and the special language/terms used by educators to discuss student needs or educational issues 3. Identifying adult and parental educational resources 4. Providing *adult education* opportunities The school provides **frequent** activities to help family members develop skills that facilitate students' education, learning, and development. The school **consistently** recommends and refers family members to other schools and institutions where they can develop education, career, and life skills.		Procedures for parent and family education include **two** of the following: 1. Assessing the needs of *students* and their families 2. Sharing information about school *instructional and assessment programs* and the special language/terms used by educators to discuss student needs or educational issues 3. Identifying adult and parental educational resources 4. Providing *adult education* opportunities The school provides **occasional** activities to help family members develop skills that facilitate students' education, learning, and development. The school **occasionally** recommends and refers family members to other schools and institutions where they can develop education, career, and life skills.		Procedures for parent and family education include **one** of the following: 1. Assessing the needs of *students* and their families 2. Sharing information about school *instructional and assessment programs* and the special language/terms used by educators to discuss student needs or educational issues 3. Identifying adult and parental educational resources 4. Providing *adult education* opportunities The school provides **few** activities to help family members develop skills that facilitate students' education, learning, and development. The school **rarely** recommends and refers family members to other schools and institutions where they can develop education, career, and life skills.		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Support Services *Attendance and Student Personnel*	Support services to *students* are **comprehensive.** The following processes for referring and supporting students are **consistently implemented:** 1. A *student personnel committee* meets regularly to review student, discipline, and special education referrals. 2. Support service providers' roles are delineated clearly. 3. Providers follow up on referrals. 4. Providers regularly communicate with classroom teachers and one another. All support services are **consistently** coordinated and reviewed to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure that all student needs are met. Procedures are **fully implemented** for monitoring attendance and for *outreach* to students and their families.		Support services to *students* are **comprehensive.** The following processes for referring and supporting students are **consistently implemented:** 1. A *student personnel committee* meets regularly to review student, discipline and special education referrals. 2. Support service providers' roles are delineated clearly. 3. Providers follow up on referrals. 4. Providers regularly communicate with classroom teachers and one another. **Some** support services are **occasionally** coordinated and reviewed to avoid duplication of effort and to ensure that all student needs are met. Procedures are **partially implemented** for monitoring attendance and for *outreach* to students and their families.		Support services to *students* are **comprehensive.** The following processes for referring and supporting students are **rarely implemented:** 1. A *student personnel committee* meets regularly to review student discipline and special education referrals. 2. Support service providers' roles are delineated clearly. 3. Providers follow up on referrals; 4. Providers regularly communicate with classroom teachers and one another. Support services are **rarely** coordinated and reviewed. Procedures are **not implemented** for monitoring attendance and for *outreach* to students and their families.		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
Support Services *Attendance and Student Personnel*	Support service providers **regularly** collaborate with external groups to expand the delivery of services to support the school's *instructional program.*		Support service providers **occasionally** collaborate with external groups to expand the delivery of services to support the school's *instructional program.*		Support service providers **rarely** collaborate with external groups to expand the delivery of services to support the school's *instructional program.*		

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Element Area	Meeting Standard 5	4	Approaching Standard 3	2	Below Standard 1	Rating 5, 4, 3, 2, 1	Evidence, Comments, Explanations
External and Physical Resources	The use of facilities and space is **fully** coordinated to accommodate all programs, services, and activities.		The use of facilities and space is **partially** coordinated to accommodate all programs, services, and activities.		The use of facilities and space is **minimally** coordinated to accommodate all programs, services, and activities.		
Noninstructional Resources	*Community resources* are **continually** identified, used, and integrated into school programs.		*Community resources* are **occasionally** identified, used, and integrated into school programs.		*Community resources* are **rarely** identified, used, and integrated into school programs.		
	The allocation of physical and external resources, such as *in-kind services*, for programs and *eligible students* is ***equitable.***		The allocation of physical and external resources, such as *in-kind services*, for programs and *eligible students* is **mostly** ***equitable.***		The allocation of physical and external resources, such as *in-kind services*, for programs and *eligible students* is **rarely** ***equitable.***		

Glossary

Definition of Terms and Modifiers

Adult Education: Educational opportunities for adult family members including formal for-credit and not-for-credit courses such as GED, ESL, computer courses, etc.

Aggregate Schoolwide Data: The full range of student, staff, and test data. May be categorized by grade levels, subject, demographics, staff experience, attendance, etc.

All Students: See *Students*.

Assessment Program: School policies and procedures for evaluating student learning that includes the testing calendar, the range of tests given (i.e., standardized, diagnostic, performance-based, teacher-made, etc.), and procedures to determine whether the assessment adequately tests what should be tested.

Authentic Modes of Assessment: Performance-based evaluating of student learning that addresses varied learning styles. This includes periodic collection and evaluation of samples of student work; e.g., portfolios, varied pieces of writing, oral presentations, multistep problem-solving in which students explain their answers, constructed hands-on projects, student notebooks, special projects, etc.

Cognitive: Pertaining to thinking, learning, and perception.

Community Resources: People, agencies, and organizations that work with the school to supplement student and staff awareness, knowledge and responsiveness by providing time, services, cultural information, activities, programs, expertise, money, equipment, supplies, or space for students, staff, or parents.

Consumable Supplies: Supplies that are used in day-to-day instructional activities, such as paper, pencils, art supplies, etc.

Critical Thinking: Cognitive skill that enables an individual to evaluate information or assess the value of information; not rote memorization, inquiry or conclusions based on evidence collected, etc. See *Higher-Order Thinking Skills*.

Current and Exemplary (Work): Work that is relevant to recent instruction, shows evidence of review/correction by a teacher, and models high standards.

Curriculum: What is taught in school, how it is taught, and how students learn. See *Instructional Program*.

Deficits model: A belief in instructional practices that approaches the student as learner with individual gifts, strengths, and talents, and not from a model that teaches to the student from his or her deficits.

Developmental/Cognitive Level: The level at which a student functions cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally. See also *Cognitive*.

Diagnostic Information: Information about an individual student's academic, social, cultural, language background and/or emotional growth over time as derived from a variety of assessment instruments. See *Assessment Program*.

Excellence: The ability to exceed standards that reflect high expectations for student learning. See *High Standards*.

Eligible Students: Students who are entitled to specific enumerated services.

Equitable (Allocation of Resources): The fair distribution of resources across all school programs and student populations that gives everyone equal access to these resources.

Formal Observations: Mandated, written observations of classroom instruction, conducted by school supervisors, administrators, external support staff (e.g. coaches, technical assistance providers, etc.) that develop and support good instructional practices in a school.

Hardware: A computer and its associated physical apparatus, such as printers, modems, etc.

High Standards: Criteria or measures that are formulated to reflect high expectations for student achievement.

Higher-Order Thinking Skills: Thought-provoking inquiry and integration of knowledge across subject areas that is encouraged and used in the course of instruction and that focuses on the "whys" and "hows," rather than on mere fact-gathering (the "whats," "wheres," and "whos"). See also *Critical Thinking*.

Inclusive Environment: The placement and incorporation of all students, regardless of racial, linguistic, cultural, socio-economic, family structure, citizenship status, or special needs, etc., into regular education settings that are consistent with their abilities and instructional objectives.

Individual Student Interests and Needs: Developmental, cognitive, language, cultural, and social student preferences, experiences, aptitudes, and capabilities.

Informal Observations: Scheduled or unscheduled observations of classroom instruction, conducted by peer mentor teachers, supervisors, administrators, and external partner coaches or technical assistance providers, to develop and support good instructional practices in a school.

In-Kind Services: A contribution of time, expertise, or resources, rather than money, to a school.

Instructional Program: A sequential plan of learning goals, objectives, activities, experiences, assessments, and evaluations for each grade and subject area in the school, i.e., the curriculum.

Mission Statement: A brief statement of the beliefs, values, and vision the school holds for its students and staff.

Multimedia Materials: Instructional or learning materials that foster multisensory learning, e.g. films, videos, slides, audio recordings, computer programs, manipulatives, etc.

Mutually Supportive Groups: Working relationships in which students help one another; such as cooperative learning, peer tutoring, lab or project partners, etc.

Organizational Structure: (1) Formal roles and responsibilities within the school, including supervisory and communication linkages. (2) Space allocations for classes, programs, and staff. (3) Class and activity schedules and grouping arrangements for students and staff; e.g., common preps and grade meetings, schoolwide literacy periods, lunchtime library hours, after-school programs, etc.

Outreach: Organized efforts on the part of the school to extend itself beyond the school facility and interact with families, the larger community, and related resources.

Parental/Family Educational Resources: Individuals, organizations, materials, or agencies that provide parenting support and information, and that offer information about other resources to support families.

Performance Standards: Specific benchmarks for student achievement and school practices that are associated with exemplary schools.

Physical Plant: The physical facilities of a school building and its schoolyard and grounds including the classrooms, hallways, cafeteria, restrooms, science, computer and technology laboratories, auditoriums, stairwells, gymnasiums, playground, and any other features of the school's physical environment.

Policies and Procedures: Guidelines and courses of action that have been developed to determine present and future decisions; e.g., grading, promotion, grouping, attendance, discipline, etc.

Professional Self-Development: Personal pursuit of career-related learning experiences; e.g., attending courses, conferences, and workshops at one's initiative; reading professional journals, books, and other literature; participating in reading circles, etc.

School Community: All who work in or have a stake and interest in the success and well-being of a school, its students, and staff. This specifically includes the administrative, supervisory, and teaching staff; the nonpedagogical staff including office, cafeteria, and custodial workers; as well as students and their families.

School-Developed Tests: Examinations developed by teachers to assess learning; e.g., departmental, quizzes, end-of-unit, midterms, etc.

School Leadership Team: A team that includes at a minimum the principal, assistant principals, LSC president/chair, teachers, and other staff who work together regularly to improve the school.

School Plans: Written blueprints for school improvement that states the school's current situation, what needs to be changed, how these items will be addressed, and how the school will assess the effectiveness of the change.

School Safety Plan: A mandated plan that provides details of procedures to be followed in such emergency situations as fire, a bomb scare, or intruders, and which includes the roles and responsibilities of all school personnel

Skills, Values, and Attitudes: Those essential elements that help children achieve success in and beyond school, including all four of the following:

- **Behavioral Skills**: Abilities that promote teaching and learning; e.g., listening, communication, perseverance, cooperation, conflict resolution, self-control, appreciation of multiple perspectives, etc.
- **Study Skills**: Skills that serve to prepare for and reinforce learning, such as reading for information and reinforcement, summarizing, writing, effective time management, note-taking, outlining, using graphic organizers, etc.
- **Citizenship Values**: Ideals that promote successful social adjustment, multicultural capacity, and individual rights and responsibilities; i.e., democratic governance, social justice issues, pluralism and diversity, environmental issues, etc.
- **Work Habits**: Approaches applied regularly that enhance learning and prepare students for interacting with others and their environment.

Software: Computer programs or applications that support learning and skill-building

Students: All students, including those who require special education, facilities and staff, or special programs and support, such as ESL, bilingual education, or the talented and gifted program.

Student Performance: Student achievement of content and performance standards as measured by the full range of tests administered and by review of authentic and relevant student work that acknowledges diverse learning styles and aptitudes.

Student Personnel Committee: A committee whose purpose is to discuss and plan a course of action for students who have been referred for academic and/or behavioral problems. The committee's members may include educational staff. The committee may also be called the *Instructional Support Committee*.

Technology Centers: Science, computer, and language laboratories, studios, and shops.

Technology Support System: Assistance provided to students and staff for repair, maintenance, operation, etc., of computer and other scientific or technical equipment.

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